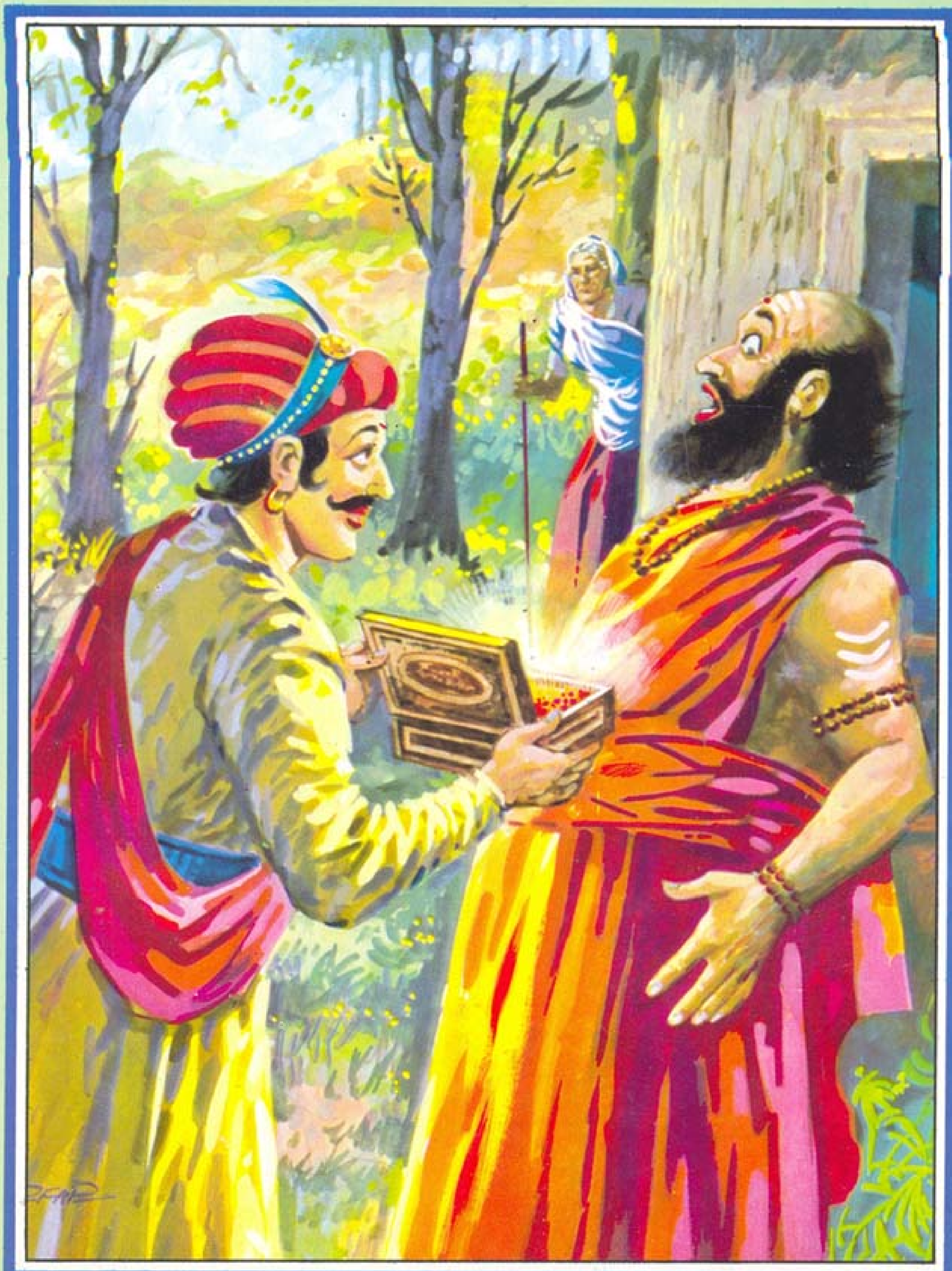
AMAR CHITRA KATHA

Birbal to the Rescue

Vol. 618 Rs. 25



Amar Chitra Katha: the Glorious Heritage of India

IBH

BIRBAL TO THE RESCUE

The wit and wisdom of Birbal had endeared him not only to Akbar, but also to a vast majority of the subjects of the Mughal empire. He had the rare distinction of achieving immense popularity during his lifetime, next only to that of Akbar. He was a good administrator, a good soldier and perhaps what pleased Akbar the most—a good jester. Less known is the fact that he was also a good poet. He wrote under the pen-name, "Brahma" and a collection of his poems is preserved in the Bharatpur Museum.

Though popularly known as Birbal, his real name was Maheshdas. It is believed that he belonged to a poor brahmin family of Trivikrampur (now known as Tikawanpur) on the banks of the River Yamuna. But it was only by virtue of his sharp intellect that he rose to be a minister at the court of Akbar. His phenomenal success made many courtiers jealous of him and if the popular accounts are to be believed, they were ever busy plotting against him. According to popular legend even his death, while he was on an expedition to Afghanistan at the head of a large military force, was due to treachery. Though he was killed in the battle, the expedition was successful and subdued the turbulent province.

Akbar was so deeply moved, when he heard the news of Birbal's death, that he burst forth into a couplet and lamented, "Birbal, you never hurt the helpless. You always gave them whatever you had. I am helpless now and yet you have left nothing for me."

Akbar had found in Birbal a true friend and sympathiser. Of the handful of followers of the Din-e-Elahi, the new faith preached by Akbar, there was only one Hindu, Birbal.

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A POTFUL OF WISDOM
ONE DAY, AN ENVOY FROM THE COURT OF THE KING OF CEYLON CAME TO AKBAR'S COURT ON A STRANGE MISSION.
JAHANPANAH, YOU HAVE MANY WISE MEN AT YOUR COURT. I HAVE BEEN SENT BY MY KING TO REQUEST YOU FOR A POTFUL OF WISDOM.
A POTFUL OF WISDOM? WHAT A RIDICULOUS REQUEST!
THE KING OF CEYLON IS OUT TO BAFFLE US.
AND HE'LL SUCCEED. NO ONE, NOT EVEN BIRBAL, CAN GET US OUT OF THIS ONE.

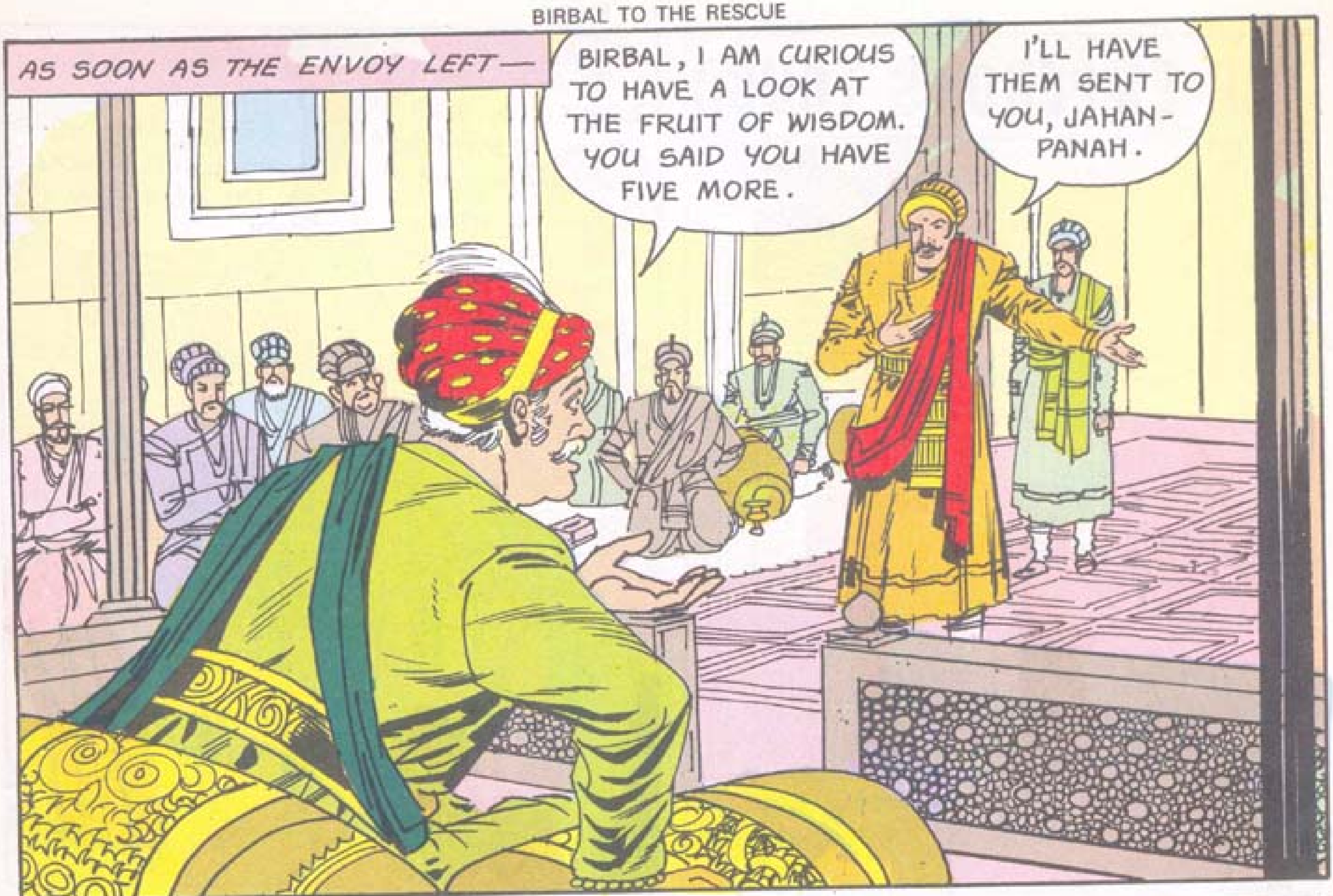

WELL, BIRBAL ?
JAHANPANAH, WE COULD EASILY SPARE SOME WISDOM.
BUT IT'LL TAKE TIME — PERHAPS A FEW WEEKS.
I'M WILLING TO WAIT.
LATER —
WELL, BIRBAL. I HOPE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING. OUR PRESTIGE IS AT STAKE.
DON'T WORRY, JAHANPANAH. THE KING OF CEYLON SHALL HAVE HIS POTFUL OF WISDOM.
THAT EVENING, BIRBAL SENT FOR HIS ATTENDANT.
BRING ME A FEW CLAY POTS WITH NARROW NECKS.
THE ATTENDANT SOON CAME BACK WITH THE POTS.
AH ! THERE YOU ARE ! GOOD. FOLLOW ME TO THE PUMPKIN PATCH.


AT THE PUMPKIN PATCH—
GIVE ME ONE OF THOSE POTS.
BIRBAL CAREFULLY PLACED THE POT OVER A PUMPKIN FLOWER.
NOW PLACE THE OTHER POTS IN THE SAME MANNER.
WHEN THE ATTENDANT FINISHED PLACING THE LAST POT —
KEEP AN EYE ON THESE, AND DON'T LET THEM BE MOVED.
I'LL HAVE THEM COLLECTED LATER.
ANY TIME, HUZUR.

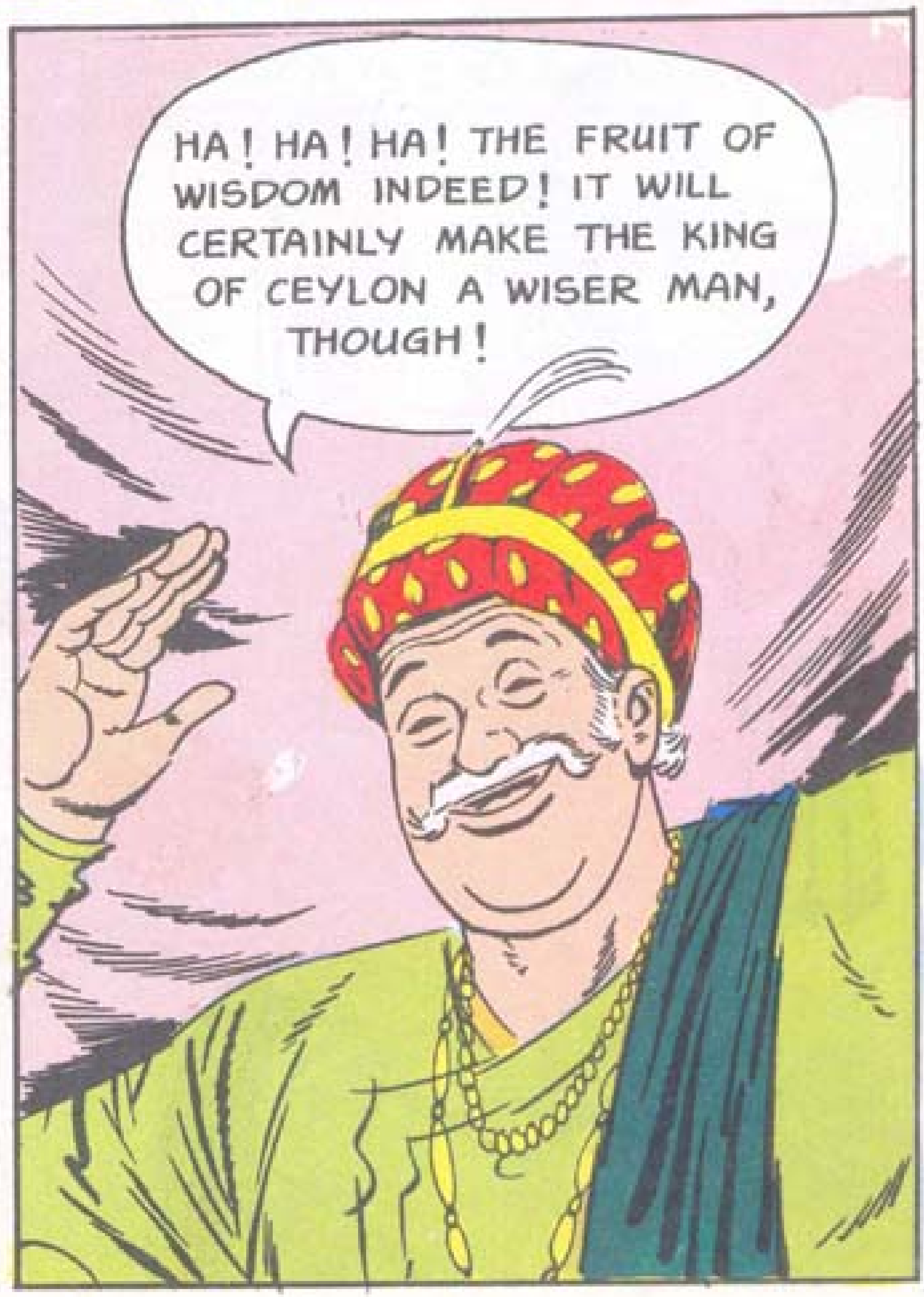

A FEW WEEKS LATER —
HAVE YOU MADE ANY PROGRESS, BIRBAL ?
YES, JAHANPANAH. I'M ALMOST THROUGH WITH THE TASK.
I SHOULD BE ABLE TO HAVE THE POT FILLED IN... SAY... A FORTNIGHT.
A FORTNIGHT LATER —
AHA — NOW THEY ARE ALMOST AS BIG AS THE POTS ! GOOD!
YOU SHALL BE HANDSOMELY REWARDED FOR YOUR LABOUR.
LATER BIRBAL HAD THE ENVOY SUMMONED TO COURT.
THE POTFUL OF WISDOM IS READY, JAHANPANAH.


BIRBAL CLAPPED HIS HANDS —
THE NEXT MOMENT, HIS ATTEND-ANT WALKED SOLEMNLY IN, CARRYING A TRAY WITH A POT ON IT.
HERE YOU ARE. YOU MAY TAKE IT TO YOUR KING. BUT REMEMBER...
...OUR PRECIOUS POT MUST BE RETURNED EMPTY AND INTACT. AND...
...THE FRUIT OF WISDOM THAT IT CONTAINS, TO BE OF ANY VALUE, MUST BE REMOVED WITHOUT A SCRATCH!


MAY I HAVE A LOOK AT IT?
CERTAINLY.
WE HAVE FIVE MORE, IF YOUR KING NEEDS ANY MORE WISDOM.
WE ARE NO MATCH FOR BIRBAL. WHY DID WE EVER TRY!


AS SOON AS THE ENVOY LEFT—
BIRBAL, I AM CURIOUS TO HAVE A LOOK AT THE FRUIT OF WISDOM. YOU SAID YOU HAVE FIVE MORE.
I'LL HAVE THEM SENT TO YOU, JAHAN-PANAH.


WHEN THE OTHER POTS WERE BROUGHT, AKBAR LOOKED INTO ONE OF THEM...
?

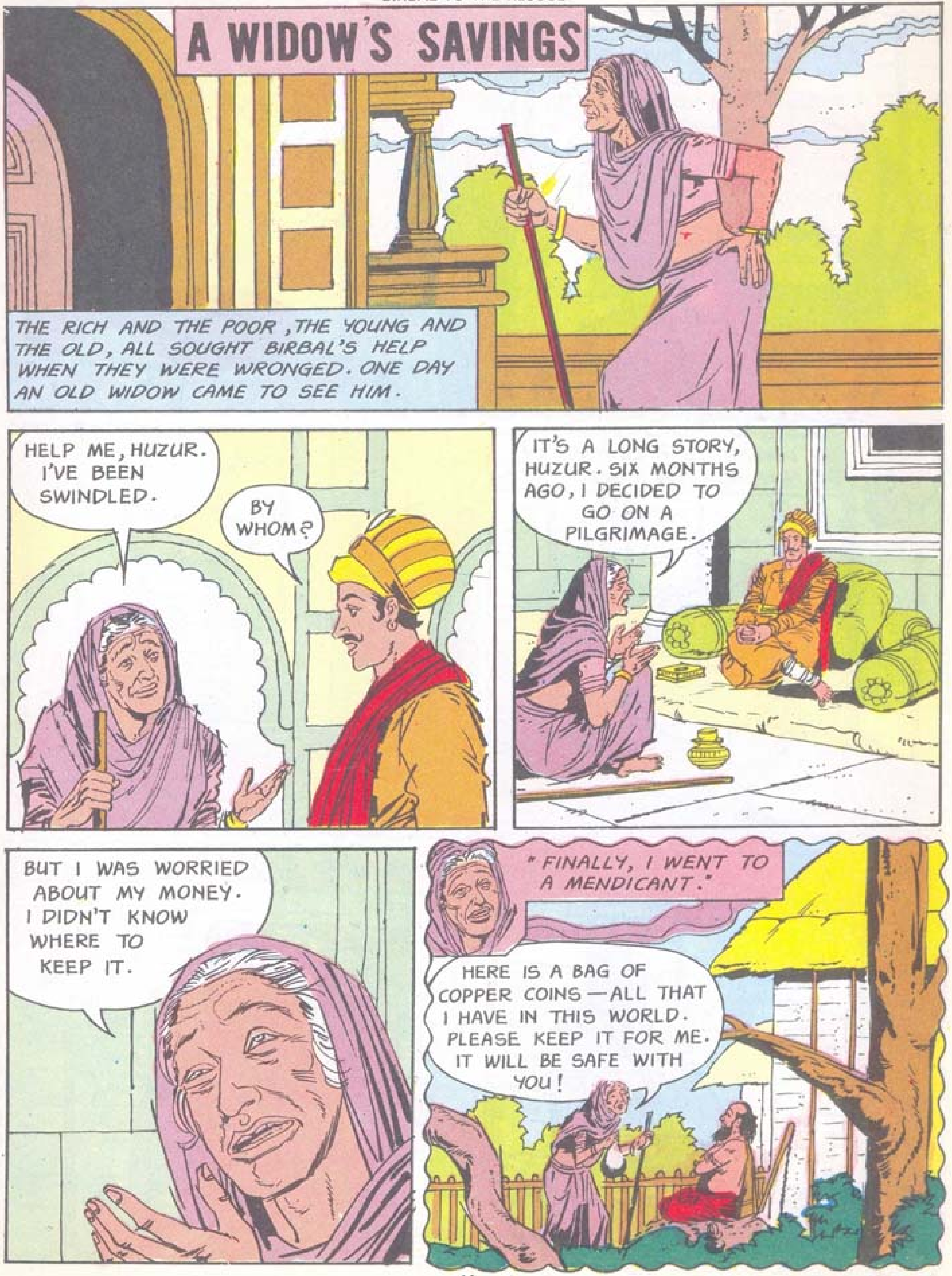

HA! HA! HA! THE FRUIT OF WISDOM INDEED! IT WILL CERTAINLY MAKE THE KING OF CEYLON A WISER MAN, THOUGH!

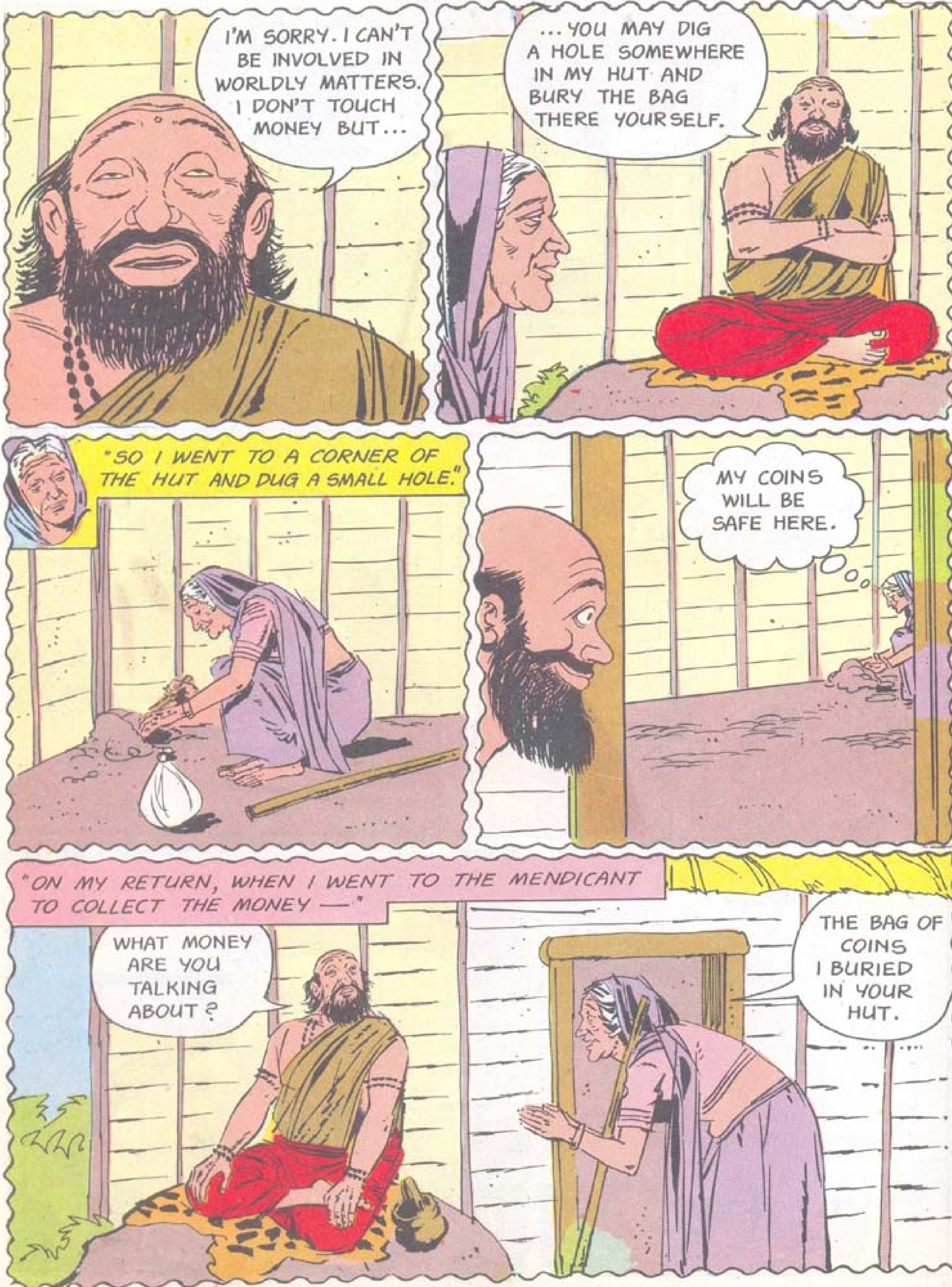

THE EMPEROR'S TOUCH
ONE DAY, AN OLD WOMAN AND HER WIDOWED DAUGHTER-IN-LAW CAME TO BIRBAL.
MY SON HAD SERVED IN THE ROYAL ARMY FOR TWENTY YEARS. BUT NOW, HE IS DEAD AND WE HAVE NO ONE TO TURN TO!
OUR EMPEROR IS KIND AND GENEROUS. HE WILL HELP YOU. DO AS I SAY.
THE FOLLOWING DAY, AT COURT—
JAHANPANAH, THIS SWORD ONCE WIELDED BY MY SON HAS WON MANY BATTLES FOR YOU. SO, PLEASE KEEP IT IN THE ARMOURY.
LET ME SEE IT.
THE SWORD WAS HANDED OVER TO THE EMPEROR. HE EXAMINED IT CAREFULLY.
IT'S OLD AND RUSTY... OF NO USE TO US WHATSOEVER.

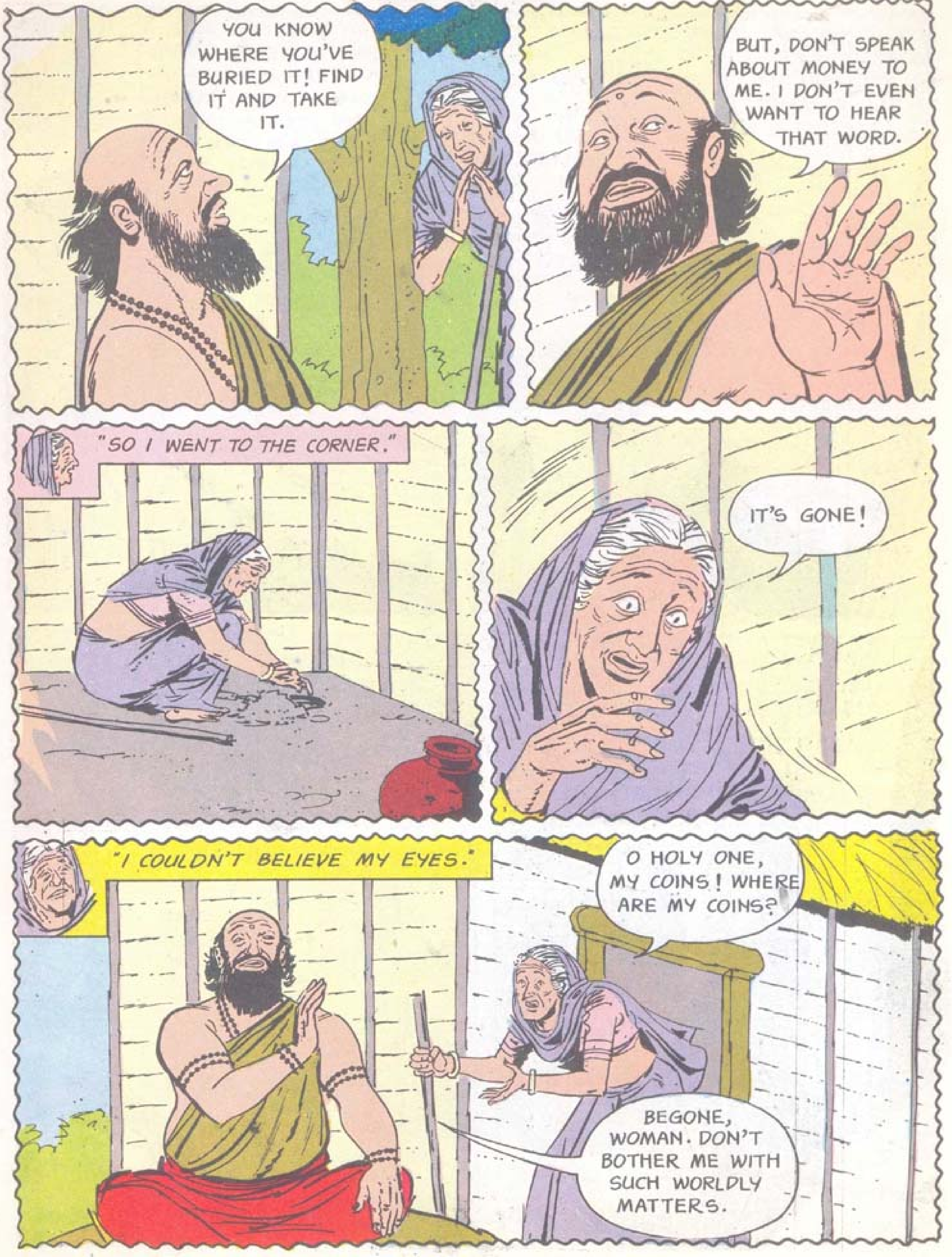

HE GAVE THE SWORD TO AN ATTENDANT.
RETURN IT TO HER AND GIVE HER FIVE GOLD COINS FOR HER TROUBLE.
JUST FIVE GOLD COINS!
MAY I INSPECT THE SWORD, JAHANPANAH?
BIRBAL TOOK THE SWORD...
...AND LOOKED AT IT CLOSELY...
...AGAIN AND AGAIN.
?



* A LEGENDARY STONE CREDITED WITH THE POWER OF CHANGING IRON INTO GOLD


A WIDOW'S SAVINGS
THE RICH AND THE POOR, THE YOUNG AND THE OLD, ALL SOUGHT BIRBAL'S HELP WHEN THEY WERE WRONGED. ONE DAY AN OLD WIDOW CAME TO SEE HIM.
HELP ME, HUZUR. I'VE BEEN SWINDLED.
BY WHOM?
IT'S A LONG STORY, HUZUR. SIX MONTHS AGO, I DECIDED TO GO ON A PILGRIMAGE.
BUT I WAS WORRIED ABOUT MY MONEY. I DIDN'T KNOW WHERE TO KEEP IT.
"FINALLY, I WENT TO A MENDICANT."
HERE IS A BAG OF COPPER COINS — ALL THAT I HAVE IN THIS WORLD. PLEASE KEEP IT FOR ME. IT WILL BE SAFE WITH YOU!

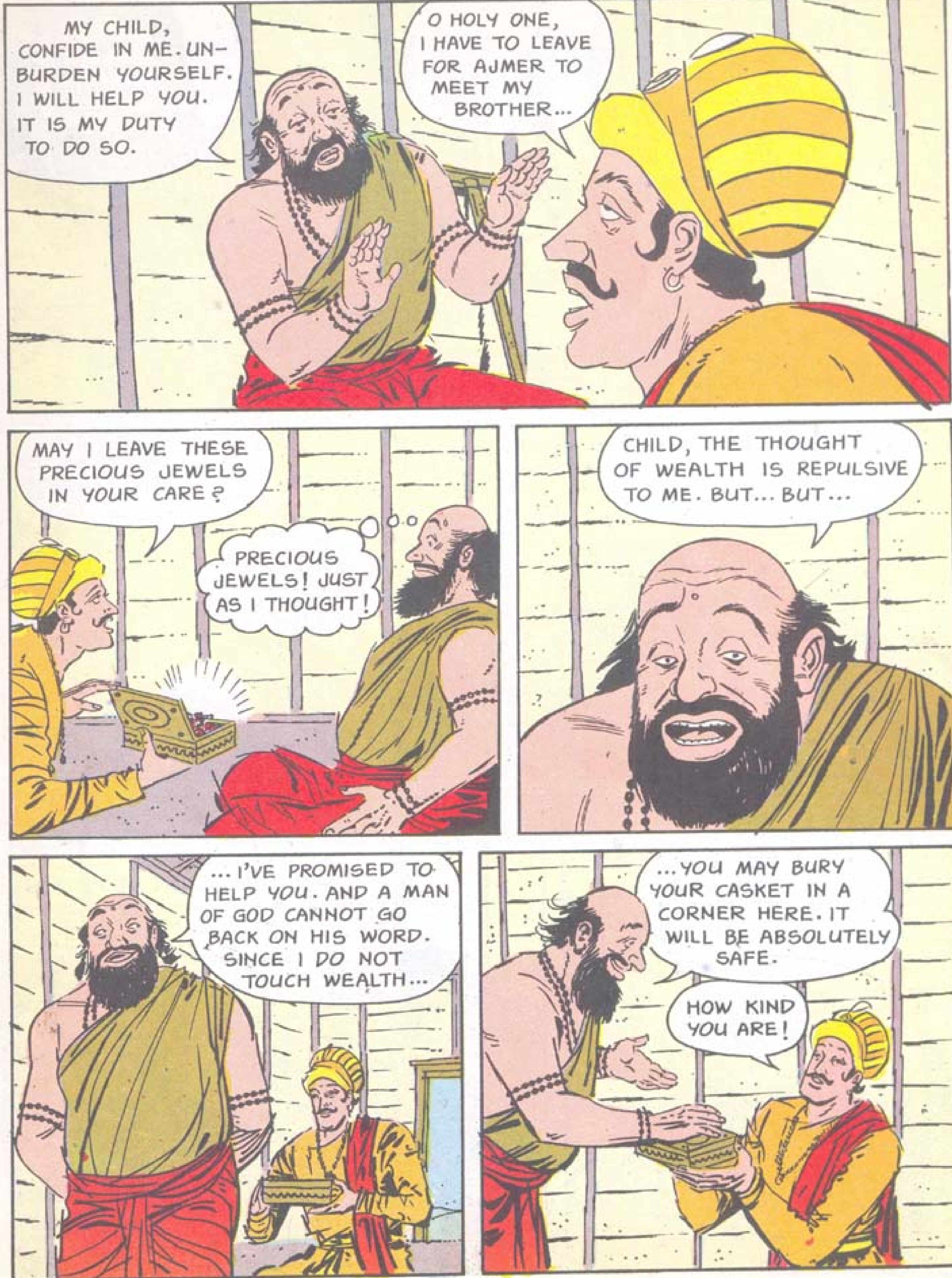

I'M SORRY. I CAN'T BE INVOLVED IN WORLDLY MATTERS. I DON'T TOUCH MONEY BUT...
... YOU MAY DIG A HOLE SOMEWHERE IN MY HUT AND BURY THE BAG THERE YOURSELF.
"SO I WENT TO A CORNER OF THE HUT AND DUG A SMALL HOLE."
MY COINS WILL BE SAFE HERE.
"ON MY RETURN, WHEN I WENT TO THE MENDICANT TO COLLECT THE MONEY —"
WHAT MONEY ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT ?
THE BAG OF COINS I BURIED IN YOUR HUT.


YOU KNOW WHERE YOU'VE BURIED IT! FIND IT AND TAKE IT.
BUT, DON'T SPEAK ABOUT MONEY TO ME. I DON'T EVEN WANT TO HEAR THAT WORD.
"SO I WENT TO THE CORNER."
IT'S GONE!
"I COULDN'T BELIEVE MY EYES."
O HOLY ONE, MY COINS! WHERE ARE MY COINS?
BEGONE, WOMAN. DON'T BOTHER ME WITH SUCH WORLDLY MATTERS.

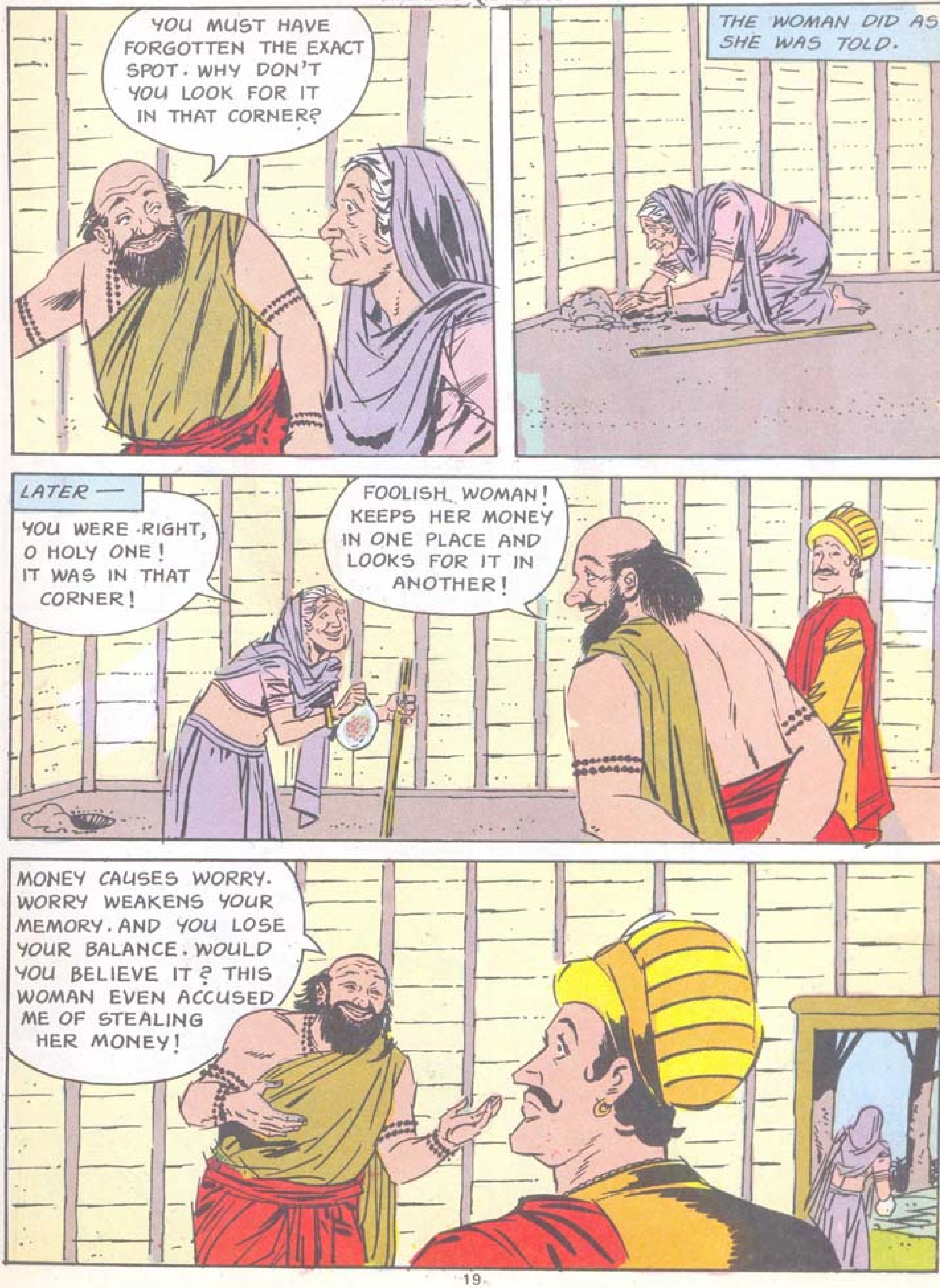

BUT SIR, I DID BURY IT HERE... THREE MONTHS AGO ... IN YOUR PRESENCE!
QUITE POSSIBLE. BUT I AM BLIND TO WHAT GOES ON IN THIS MATERIALISTIC WORLD.
MY MIND HAS ONLY ONE THOUGHT—RAMA; MY EARS HEAR ONLY ONE SOUND—RAMA; MY EYES BEHOLD BUT ONE FORM—RAMA!
I CAME AWAY. WHAT ELSE COULD I DO?
COULD THE MENDICANT HAVE STOLEN YOUR COINS?
I AM SURE HE HAS. BUT I HAVE NO PROOF.
HM.

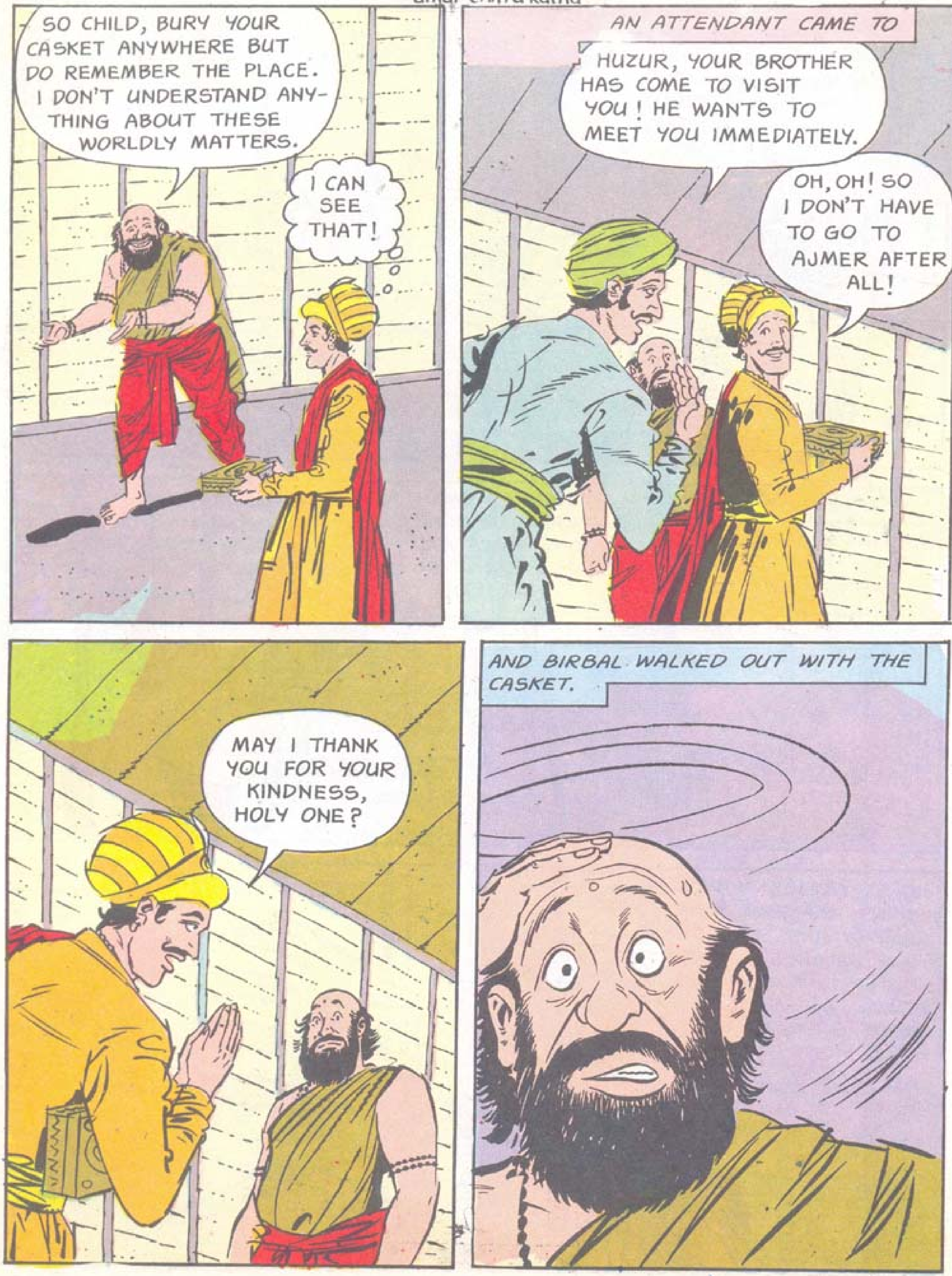

WELL, WE'LL SOON FIND OUT. LISTEN CAREFULLY...
A LITTLE LATER —
THAT'S THE PLACE, HUZUR.
GOOD. NOW HIDE BEHIND THIS TREE. AND REMEMBER, YOU MUST WALK INTO THE HUT ONLY WHEN I FALL AT HIS FEET FOR THE SECOND TIME.
I WILL ENTER THE HUT AT THE EXACT MOMENT, HUZUR.
NOT A MOMENT EARLIER NOR A MOMENT LATER.


BIRBAL WENT INTO THE HUT AND FELL PROSTRATE IN FRONT OF THE MENDICANT.
BLESS ME, MASTER.
MAY YOU LIVE LONG, MY CHILD.
I HAVE HEARD PEOPLE TALK ABOUT YOUR SPIRITUAL EMINENCE. TODAY I HAVE HAD THE GOOD FORTUNE OF RECEIVING YOUR BLESSINGS.
I WONDER WHAT HE HAS IN THE CASKET. GOLD? JEWELS?
HOLY ONE, I HATE TO TROUBLE YOU WITH THE PROBLEMS WE FOOLISH MORTALS HAVE. BUT...
SPEAK UP, CHILD. LET ME HELP YOU IF I CAN.
NO, SIR. YOU MUSTN'T. YOU ARE A MAN OF GOD. I SHOULDN'T BURDEN YOU WITH WORLDLY WORRIES.
WHAT! IS HE GOING AWAY WITH THE CASKET?
BUT... BUT WHO ELSE CAN I TRUST IN THIS WICKED, WICKED WORLD? PLEASE GUIDE ME.
HE IS WAVERING. I MUST LAY HANDS ON THAT CASKET.


MY CHILD, CONFIDE IN ME. UNBURDEN YOURSELF. I WILL HELP YOU. IT IS MY DUTY TO DO SO.
O HOLY ONE, I HAVE TO LEAVE FOR AJMER TO MEET MY BROTHER...
MAY I LEAVE THESE PRECIOUS JEWELS IN YOUR CARE?
PRECIOUS JEWELS! JUST AS I THOUGHT!
CHILD, THE THOUGHT OF WEALTH IS REPULSIVE TO ME. BUT... BUT...
... I'VE PROMISED TO HELP YOU. AND A MAN OF GOD CANNOT GO BACK ON HIS WORD. SINCE I DO NOT TOUCH WEALTH...
... YOU MAY BURY YOUR CASKET IN A CORNER HERE. IT WILL BE ABSOLUTELY SAFE.
HOW KIND YOU ARE!


I SHALL ALWAYS BE GRATEFUL TO YOU.
AH! THAT'S MY CUE.
AS THE OLD WOMAN ENTERED THE HUT —
WHY DID THIS WRETCH HAVE TO COME HERE NOW? WHAT IF SHE STARTS SHOUTING FOR HER MONEY?
SHOULD I LOSE THOSE PRECIOUS JEWELS FOR THE SAKE OF A BAG OF COPPER COINS? NO!
THANK GOD YOU'RE BACK! I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT YOUR BAG OF COINS. I'M SURE YOU MADE A MISTAKE THE OTHER DAY!
BUT...


YOU MUST HAVE FORGOTTEN THE EXACT SPOT. WHY DON'T YOU LOOK FOR IT IN THAT CORNER?
THE WOMAN DID AS SHE WAS TOLD.
LATER —
YOU WERE RIGHT, O HOLY ONE! IT WAS IN THAT CORNER!
FOOLISH WOMAN! KEEPS HER MONEY IN ONE PLACE AND LOOKS FOR IT IN ANOTHER!
MONEY CAUSES WORRY. WORRY WEAKENS YOUR MEMORY. AND YOU LOSE YOUR BALANCE. WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT? THIS WOMAN EVEN ACCUSED ME OF STEALING HER MONEY!



SO CHILD, BURY YOUR CASKET ANYWHERE BUT DO REMEMBER THE PLACE. I DON'T UNDERSTAND ANYTHING ABOUT THESE WORLDLY MATTERS.
I CAN SEE THAT!
AN ATTENDANT CAME TO
HUZUR, YOUR BROTHER HAS COME TO VISIT YOU! HE WANTS TO MEET YOU IMMEDIATELY.
OH, OH! SO I DON'T HAVE TO GO TO AJMER AFTER ALL!
MAY I THANK YOU FOR YOUR KINDNESS, HOLY ONE?
AND BIRBAL WALKED OUT WITH THE CASKET.

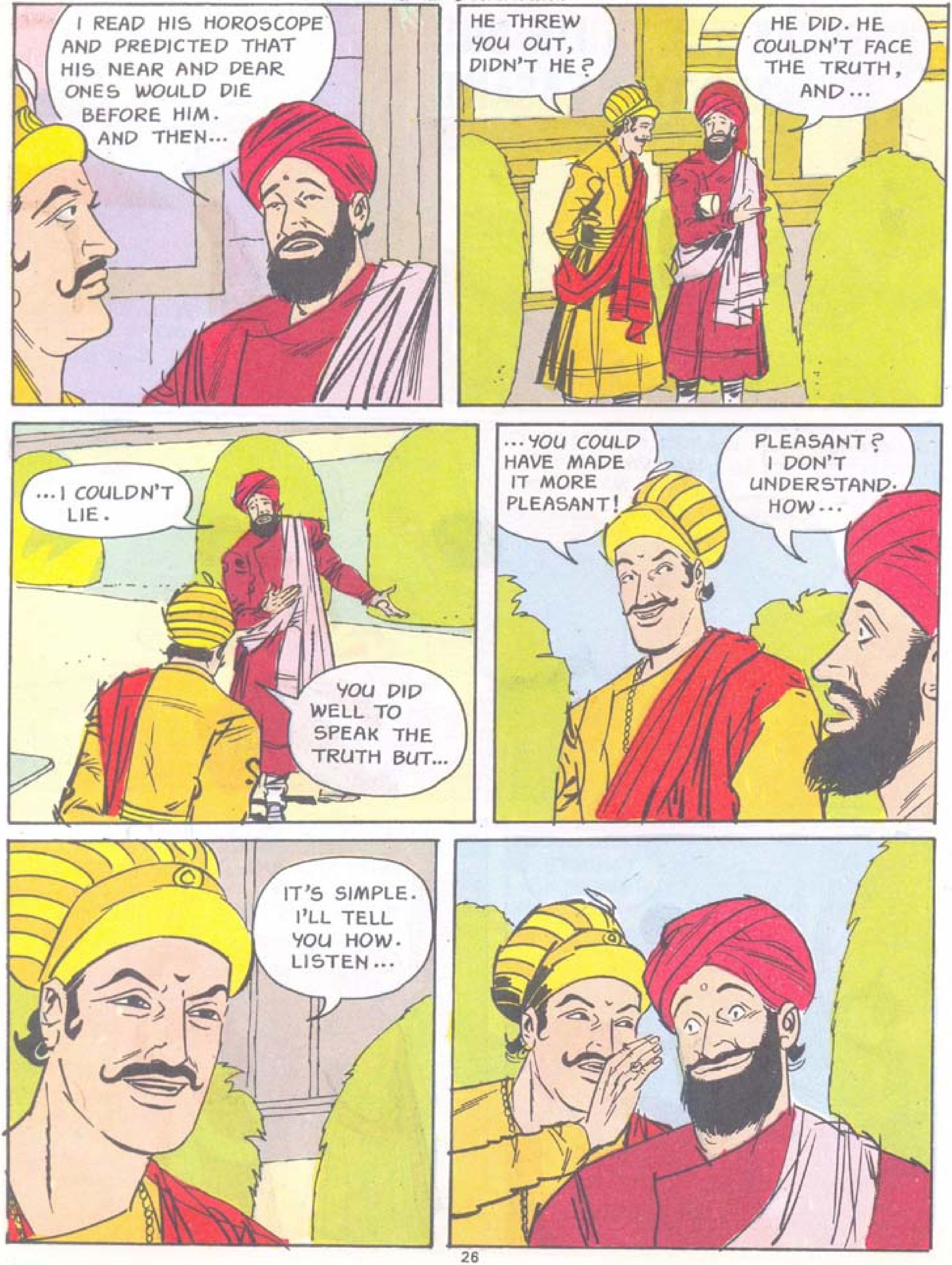

THE PERFECT PORTRAIT
ONE DAY, BIRBAL WAS SURPRISED TO FIND THE NORMALLY CHEERFUL COURT ARTIST LOOKING GLUM.
WHAT'S THE MATTER, MY FRIEND?
MY REPUTATION IS AT STAKE.
BUT YOU ARE THE BEST ARTIST THE COURT HAS EVER KNOWN. I DON'T UNDERSTAND...
YOU WILL, WHEN I'VE TOLD YOU THE WHOLE STORY.
THE ARTIST TOOK BIRBAL TO HIS HOUSE AND SHOWED HIM FIVE PORTRAITS.
AREN'T THESE OF THE SAME MAN?
THEY ARE OF A RICH NOBLE.


"A MONTH AGO HE THREW ME A CHALLENGE."
I BET, YOU CAN'T CREATE AN EXACT LIKENESS OF ME.
I BET, I CAN.
"HE POSED AND I GOT DOWN TO WORK. AT LAST —"
THAT'S ALL. I'LL GIVE THE PORTRAIT A FEW FINISHING TOUCHES AND BRING IT TO YOU TOMORROW.
"ON THE FOLLOWING DAY, WHEN I HANDED THE PORTRAIT TO HIM, CONFIDENT OF WINNING THE BET —"
THIS WON'T DO! IT ISN'T AN EXACT LIKENESS. I DON'T HAVE A BEARD!
BUT YOU DID HAVE ONE WHEN YOU POSED FOR THE PORTRAIT!
A BET IS A BET! AND AN EXACT LIKENESS AN EXACT LIKENESS! HERE! YOU MAY KEEP THIS AS A MEMENTO.
PLEASE GIVE ME ANOTHER CHANCE.
ALL RIGHT. YOU MAY TRY AGAIN.


"HE POSED FOR ME ONCE MORE. WHEN I TOOK THE FINISHED PORTRAIT TO HIM —"
BUT WHY THIS MOUSTACHE?
DO I HAVE A MOUSTACHE?
YOU'VE SHAVED IT OFF TODAY.
NO MORE OF YOUR CHEEK, YOUNG MAN! THE COURT WILL SOON KNOW WHAT KIND OF ARTIST YOU ARE!
NO! PLEASE GIVE ME ANOTHER CHANCE!
ONLY AFTER FIVE SUCH SITTINGS, DID I REALISE THAT HE WAS OUT TO RUIN MY REPUTATION!
OH! WHAT A FOOL I'VE BEEN! HOW COULD I...


CALM YOURSELF, MY FRIEND. ALL IS NOT LOST! DO AS I TELL YOU AND YOU'LL HAVE THE LAST LAUGH!
A FEW DAYS LATER —
OH, IT'S YOU AGAIN! WHAT HAVE YOU COME WITH NOW? ANOTHER USE-LESS PORTRAIT?
WHEN THE NOBLE UNWRAPPED THE PARCEL —
A MIRROR!
HOW DARE YOU PLAY GAMES WITH ME! THIS IS NO PORTRAIT! IT'S...
AN EXACT LIKENESS OF YOURSELF! ISN'T THAT WHAT YOU WANTED, MY FRIEND?
THE NOBLE SHEEPISHLY ACCEPTED DEFEAT AND THE ARTIST BECAME HIS CHEER-FUL SELF AGAIN.


SPEAK THE TRUTH BUT MAKE IT PLEASANT
THERE HE IS! AT IT AGAIN!
IF BIRBAL'S NEIGHBOUR HAD A WEAKNESS, IT WAS TO HAVE HIS FORTUNE TOLD.
SUDDENLY —
YOU FRAUD! DON'T YOU DARE COME THIS WAY AGAIN!
I WON'T! EVER!
BIRBAL WENT UP TO THE MAN.
WHAT DID YOU DO TO MAKE HIM SO ANGRY?

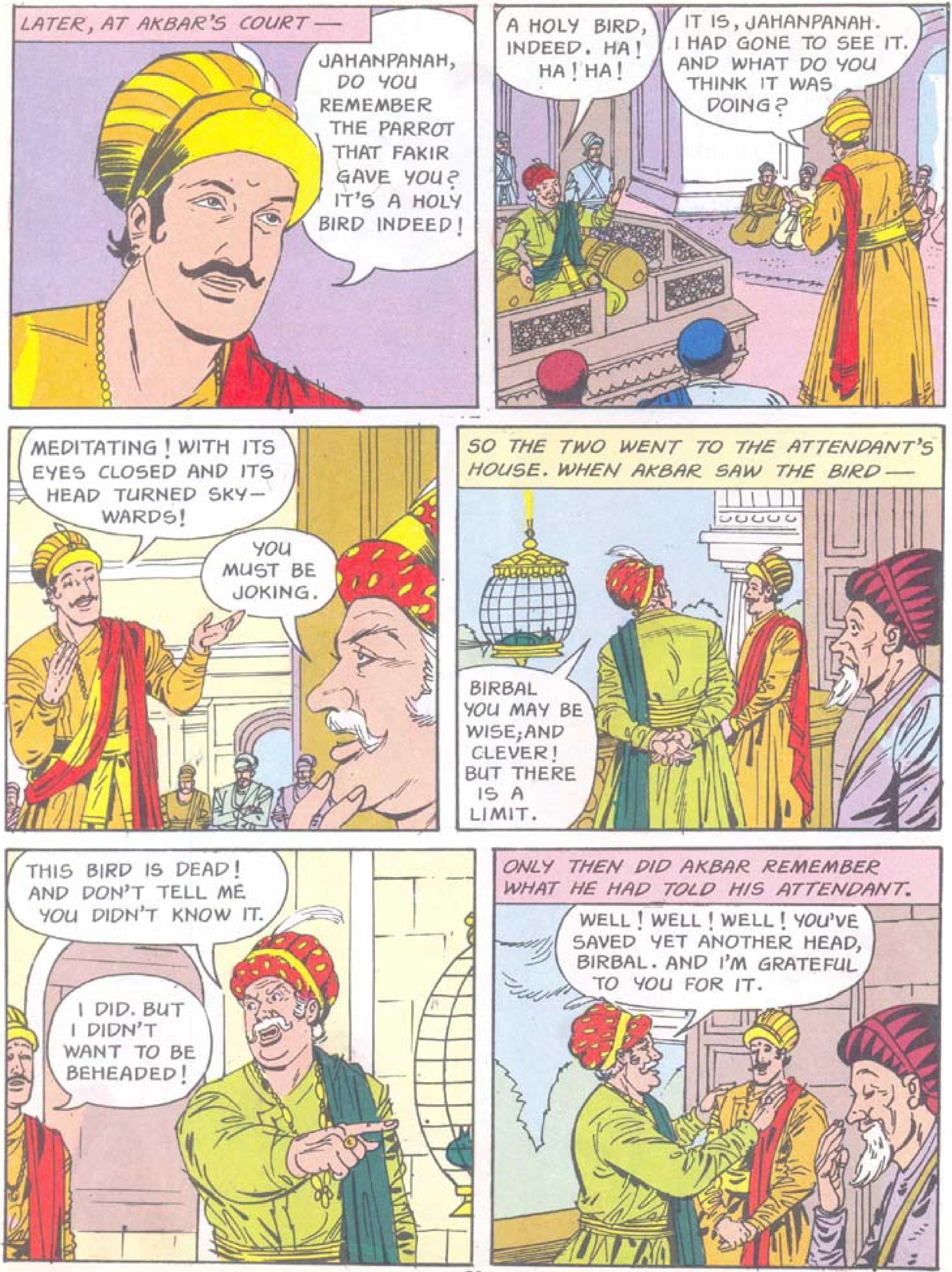

I READ HIS HOROSCOPE AND PREDICTED THAT HIS NEAR AND DEAR ONES WOULD DIE BEFORE HIM. AND THEN...
HE THREW YOU OUT, DIDN'T HE?
HE DID. HE COULDN'T FACE THE TRUTH, AND...
...I COULDN'T LIE.
YOU DID WELL TO SPEAK THE TRUTH BUT...
...YOU COULD HAVE MADE IT MORE PLEASANT!
PLEASANT? I DON'T UNDERSTAND. HOW...
IT'S SIMPLE. I'LL TELL YOU HOW. LISTEN...


...NOW DO AS I'VE TOLD YOU, AND SEE HOW HE RESPONDS. DON'T FORGET THE DISGUISE!
THE NEXT DAY —
AH, SIR! WHAT A STRIKING PERSON-ALITY YOU HAVE! MAY I READ YOUR PALM?
CERTAINLY, CERTAINLY, GOOD SIR!
WHAT A GLORIOUS FUTURE! AND WHAT A LONG LIFE! IN FACT...



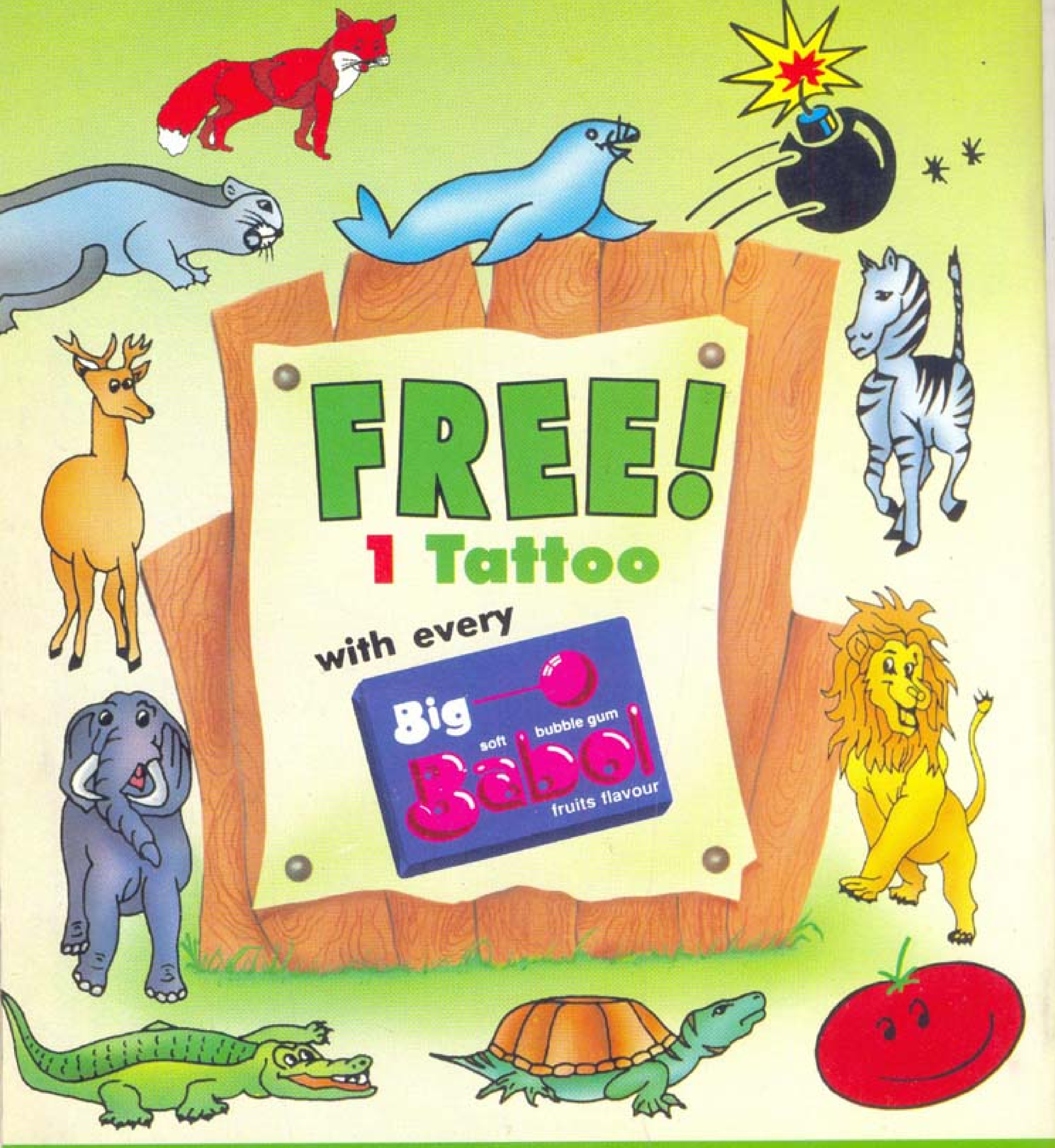
... YOU'LL LIVE LONGER THAN ALL YOUR NEAR AND DEAR ONES!
REALLY? AND THAT RASCAL SAID YESTERDAY THAT...
NEVER MIND! WHY TALK OF INAUSPICIOUS MATTERS AT THIS AUSPICIOUS MOMENT? WAIT. I HAVE SOME-THING FOR YOU.
HE WENT IN AND CAME OUT WITH A BAG OF COINS.
DO COME AGAIN WHENEVER YOU HAVE THE TIME.
I WILL. MOST CERTAINLY!
LATER —
I NEVER DREAMT, HUZUR, THAT THE MANNER IN WHICH I WORD MY READ-ING IS EVEN MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE READING ITSELF!


THE HOLY PARROT
ONE DAY, AKBAR'S FAVOURITE ATTENDANT CAME TO BIRBAL. HE WAS ALMOST IN TEARS.
HUZUR! HUZUR! YOU'VE GOT TO HELP ME! ONLY YOU CAN SAVE MY LIFE. I... THE EMPEROR...
YES... GO ON...
"A FEW MONTHS AGO, THE EMPEROR GAVE ME A PARROT."
IT'S A VERY SPECIAL BIRD; A HOLY MAN'S GIFT TO ME. TAKE GOOD CARE OF IT.
SHOULD ANYONE BRING ME NEWS OF ITS DEATH, I'LL BEHEAD HIM!
AND NOW... AND NOW IN SPITE OF MY LOVING CARE, IT SUDDENLY DIED. WHAT SHALL I DO?
IS THAT ALL? LEAVE IT TO ME. I'LL TAKE THE NEWS TO THE EMPEROR, AND YET SAVE MY HEAD!


LATER, AT AKBAR'S COURT —
JAHANPANAH, DO YOU REMEMBER THE PARROT THAT FAKIR GAVE YOU? IT'S A HOLY BIRD INDEED!
A HOLY BIRD, INDEED. HA! HA! HA!
IT IS, JAHANPANAH. I HAD GONE TO SEE IT. AND WHAT DO YOU THINK IT WAS DOING?
MEDITATING! WITH ITS EYES CLOSED AND ITS HEAD TURNED SKY-WARDS!
YOU MUST BE JOKING.
SO THE TWO WENT TO THE ATTENDANT'S HOUSE. WHEN AKBAR SAW THE BIRD —
BIRBAL YOU MAY BE WISE; AND CLEVER! BUT THERE IS A LIMIT.
THIS BIRD IS DEAD! AND DON'T TELL ME YOU DIDN'T KNOW IT.
I DID. BUT I DIDN'T WANT TO BE BEHEADED!
ONLY THEN DID AKBAR REMEMBER WHAT HE HAD TOLD HIS ATTENDANT.
WELL! WELL! WELL! YOU'VE SAVED YET ANOTHER HEAD, BIRBAL. AND I'M GRATEFUL TO YOU FOR IT.


AKBAR THE HUNTER
AKBAR WAS EXTREMELY FOND OF HUNTING. ONE DAY—
HELP US, HUZOOR!
OUR VILLAGE IS BEING RAZED!
WHY ON EARTH?
THE KING WANTS MORE FORESTS IN HIS KINGDOM.
HIS MEN HAVE ORDERS TO CREATE MORE AND MORE NEW FORESTS.
THE KING WANTS NEW JUNGLES TO HUNT IN.
I'LL TRY AND DO WHAT I CAN.
ON THE NEXT HUNTING TRIP —
AH! THIS IS SO EXHILA-RATING. DON'T YOU THINK SO, BIRBAL?
UH, HUH!
LOOK AT THOSE OWLS!
CHI-CHI-THUP THUP
THE TWO GROUPS SEEM TO BE HAVING A QUARREL.
BIRBAL IS SO WISE. HE SHOULD BE ABLE TO MAKE OUT WHAT THEY ARE SAYING.
YES, BIRBAL. TELL US WHY THEY ARE FIGHTING
I COULD TELL YOU BUT...
WHY DO YOU HESITATE?
YOUR MAJESTY MAY NOT LIKE TO HEAR IT.
GO ON. WHY SHOULD I MIND WHAT THE BIRDS SAY?


A GROUP OF OWLS HAVE COME FROM THE NEIGHBOURING KINGDOM TO MARRY ONE OF THEIR BOYS TO A GIRL OWL HERE.
THEY ARE ARRANGING FOR THE MARRIAGE. BUT THERE IS A DISPUTE BETWEEN THE GROOM'S FATHER AND THE BRIDE'S FATHER.
WHY?
THE BOY'S FATHER IS DEMANDING A GIFT OF FORTY FORESTS. BUT THE GIRL'S FATHER IS SAYING HE CANNOT COMPLY NOW...
... HOWEVER, AFTER A FEW YEARS, HE PROMISES TO GIFT EIGHTY FORESTS TO THE COUPLE.
HOW? IF HE DOESN'T HAVE FORTY FORESTS NOW, HOW WILL HE GIVE DOUBLE THE NUMBER LATER?
WELL, HE SAYS THE EMPEROR HERE IS VERY FOND OF HUNTING.
HE KEEPS CONVERTING VILLAGES INTO JUNGLES FOR HIS HUNTING PLEASURE SO THE NUMBER OF FORESTS IS SURE TO DOUBLE IN THE FUTURE.
AKBAR UNDERSTOOD THE MESSAGE BIRBAL WAS TRYING TO CONVEY.
YOU ARE RIGHT, BIRBAL. IT IS SELFISH OF ME TO DESTROY VILLAGE AFTER VILLAGE FOR MY HUNTING PLEASURE.



HOW TO USE THE BIG BABOL TATTOO



Peel the yellow protective paper.



Place the transfer (front side up) on the skin and press down firmly.



Rub on top of the transfer area with any blunt object for a few seconds.



Remove the top layer.



See. You don't even need water!

PERFETTI

* Normal packs also available. Offer open in select cities till stock lasts.